



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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GREATER GOCSE PROTECTION ASKED FOR FLORIDA REFUGE AREA

The Department of the Interior proposes to close to migratory waterfowl hunting an area of land and water in Jefferson, Taylor, and Wakulla Counties in Florida, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler announced today.

This area includes part of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge as well as certain adjacent lands and waters. This refuge is located on the Gulf coast of Florida south of Tallahassee and extends from the Aucilla River westward to the Ochlockonee River.

The St. Marks Refuge was established on March 9, 1931, and has a total area of 65,047 acres. Of this total, 32,388 acres of land were acquired by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife of the Fish and Wildlife Service, 32,566 acres by other agencies, and 93 acres were from public domain.

The revised closure is proposed primarily to provide additional protection to Canada geese which use the refuge and Apalachee Bay, including waters not previously closed to hunting. A widespread decline in waterfowl numbers throughout the general area and on the refuge necessitates further protective measures.

Notice of the proposal will appear in the Federal Register and will become effective 30 days after publication, and supersedes one issued on October 22, 1953.

Essentially, the new order differs from the 1953 order in these respects:

1. Excludes certain refuge lands along the north boundary of the Wakulla tract.
2. Includes lands and waters which were, until recently, managed by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission under cooperative agreement.
3. Includes the privately owned Wakulla Beach property.
4. Includes certain lands and waters around the Sopchoppy River.

Interested persons may send their views, data, or arguments in writing to D. H. Janzen, Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Washington 25, D.C., within 30 days of the date of publication in the Federal Register.

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